

THE  
DEFENDERS

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

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# THE DEFENDERS

SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE  
EVER-LOVIN'  
**THING**  
TO SAVE THE LIFE OF A WORLD!!

BACK OFF BUSTER--  
OR IT'S  
**CLOBBERIN'  
TIME!**

TAKE ONE  
STEP  
CLOSER,  
MORTAL--  
AND YOUR  
COMRADES  
**DIE!**



The mysterious **DR. STRANGE!** The vibrant **VALKYRIE!** The savage **SUB-MARINER!** The high-flying **NIGHTHAWK!** The incredible **HULK!** Evil-doers **TREMBLE** at the names—for these five form the core of the greatest **NON-TEAM** in history, heroes called together only when the need arises—to battle **MENACES** that threaten the security—or the very **LIFE**—of the planet **EARTH!**

Stan Lee: **THE DYNAMIC DEFENDERS!**  
PRESENTS:

STEVE GERBER / SAL BUSCEMA / VINCE COLLETTA / JOHN COSTANZA / JEFF LEBLANC / LEN WEIN  
STORY LAYOUTS FINISHED ART P. GOLDBERG, COLORS EDITOR

# The WOMAN SHE WAS...!

IT HAPPENS DAILY ON THE STREETS OF NEW YORK: AN OLD DRUNK STUMBLES, CLUTCHES AT HIS CHEST... EMITS A HOARSE, WHEEZING, ALMOST INAUDIBLE CRY... AND JUST DIES RIGHT THERE ON THE SIDEWALK. HE'S LUCKY IF ANYONE NOTICES, LET ALONE CARES.

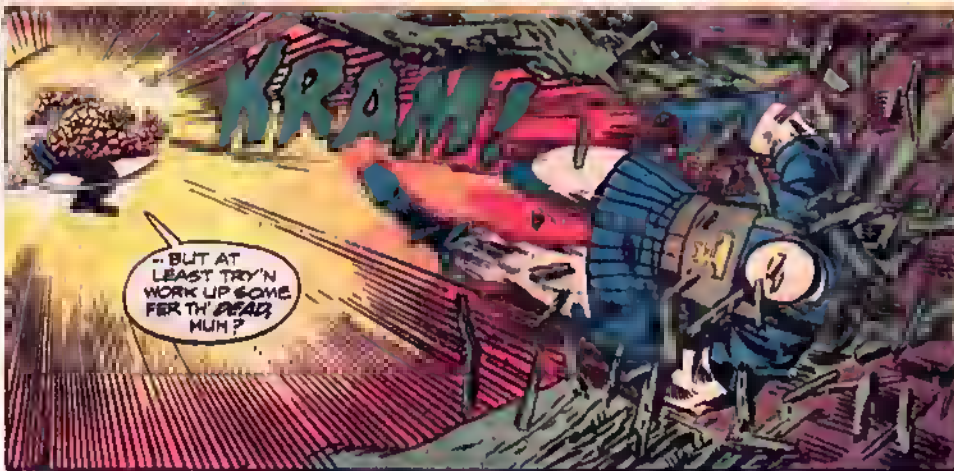
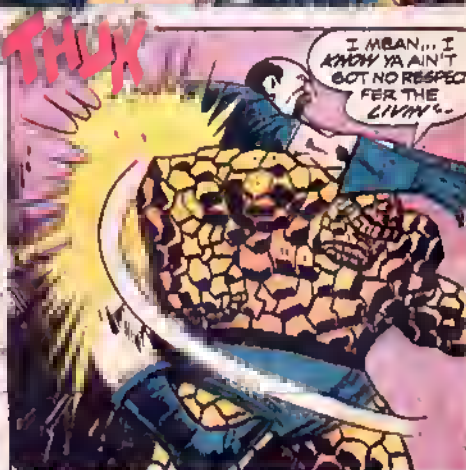
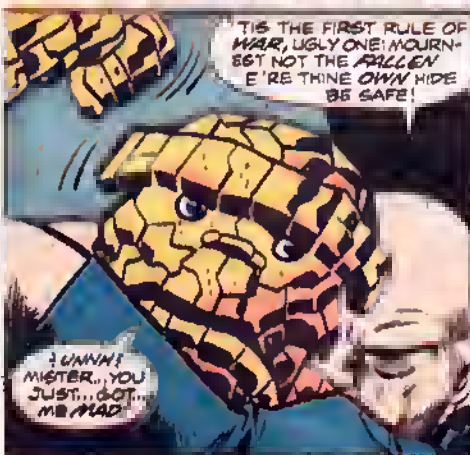
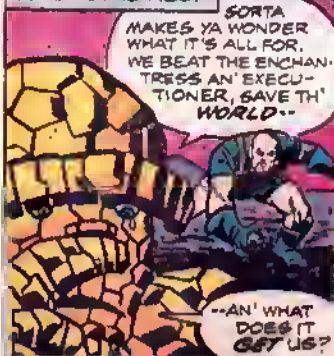
BUT THIS IS NOT NEW YORK--IT'S A HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING COBBLENE ROOST, VERMONT. AND THE DEAD OLD SOT WAS ALVIN DENTON, THE FATHER OF A GIRL NAMED BARBARA.

AND WITH HIM, BEN GRIMM, HAS DIED THE ANSWER I GO DESPERATELY SOUGHT.

THE ANSWER TO THAT MOST BASIC QUESTION OF ALL: "WHO AM I?" FOR THE VALKYRIE WAS CREATED FULL-GROWN, WITHOUT A PAST, BY THE ENCHANTRESS' MAGIC--AND INHABITS THE BODY OF BARBARA DENTON--A PERSON SHE NEVER KNEW.



THUS, VAL WEEPS FOR THIS STRANGER AND, IN SPITE OF HIMSELF, SO DOES THE THING, WHO BECAME INVOLVED IN VAL'S CRISIS PURELY BY ACCIDENT HERE HOURS AGO.





RESPECT? FOR A WERE CARCASS?  
VERILY, MORTAL, REASON DOTH  
FAIL THEE.

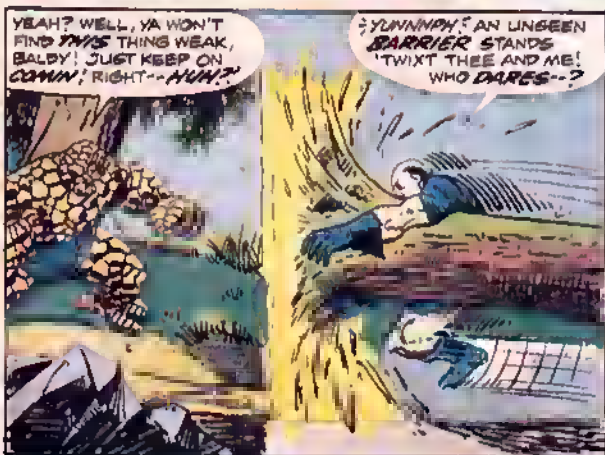
MY NAME IS EXECU-  
TIONER, IN ASSARD,  
'T WAS MY FUNCTION  
TO KILL WITHOUT  
REMORSE.

MISTER...  
SOME  
CREEPS  
IN MY  
TIME--



--BUT YOU TAKE EVERY  
CRUMB O' THE CAKE!  
DON'T YA FEEL NUTHIN'  
ABOUT NUTHIN'?

AYE, I  
FEEL--A DEEP  
AND ABIDING  
LOATHINGS  
FOR ALL  
THINGS  
WEAK!



YEAH? WELL, YA WON'T  
FIND THIS THING WEAK,  
BALDY! JUST KEEP ON  
COMIN', RIGHT--HUN?

YUNNHH! AN UNSEEN  
BARRIER STANDS  
'T WIXT THEE AND ME!  
WHO DARES--?



ENCHANTRESS!  
'T WAS THEE--?

AYE--OUR BUSI-  
NESS HERE IS  
DONE, MY BRUTISH  
ALLY, 'T IS FOLLY TO  
FIGHT ON ONCE THE  
PRIZE IS LOST.



THUS, LET US DEPART-- TO  
SEEK ANOTHER ROUTE TO  
THE CONQUEST OF EARTH  
AND ASSARD!

THEY'RE GONE-- BOTH OF 'EM!  
ENCHANTRESS MUST'A FIGGERED  
THE HARMONICA'S POWER WUZ  
ALL USED UP... AFTER ALVIN  
BLEW IT AN' THE WORLD FELL  
APART.

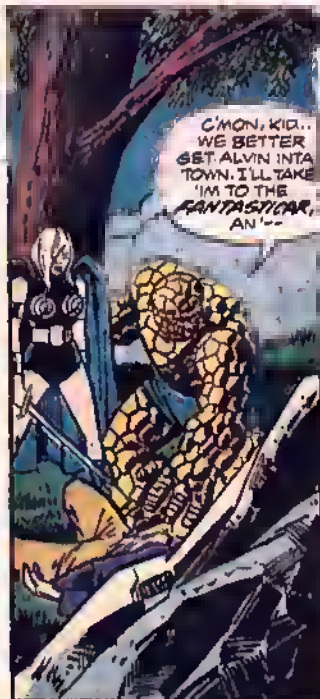
YEAH... THAT  
SOUNDS STUPID  
ENUFF TA BE



SURE, WHO SAID LIFE HADDA  
MAKE SENSE... THAT THERE  
HADDA BE A REASON FER  
LIVIN' AN' DYIN'?

VAL...?



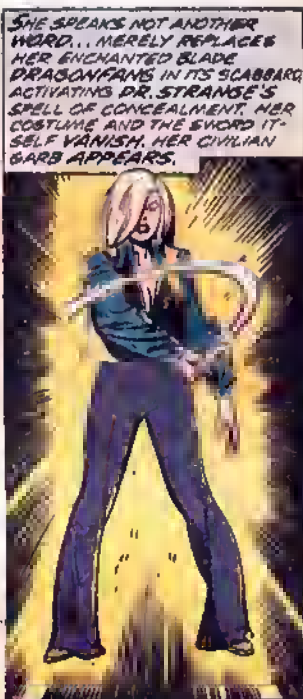


C'MON, KID...  
WE BETTER  
GET ALVIN INTO  
TOWN. I'LL TAKE  
'IM TO THE  
FANTASTICAR,  
AN'--

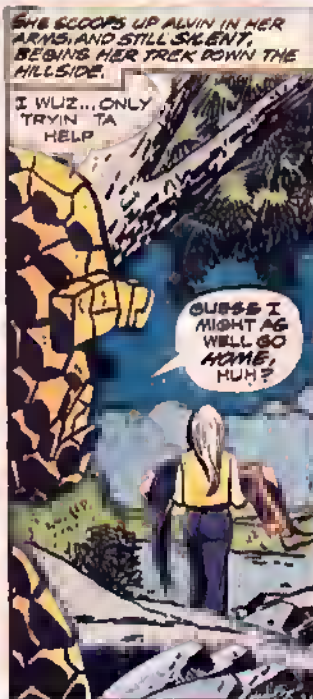


NO! NO ONE  
TOUCHES HIM  
BUT ME, DO  
YOU HEAR?  
NO ONE!!

I SHALL  
BEAR HIM  
TO COBBLER'S  
ROOST--  
MYSELF!  
ALONE!



SHE SPEAKS NOT ANOTHER  
WORD... MERELY REPLACES  
HER ENCHANTED BLADE  
DRAGONFANS IN ITS SCABBARD,  
ACTIVATING DR. STRANGE'S  
SPELL OF CONCEALMENT. HER  
COSTUME AND THE SWORD IT-  
SELF VANISH. HER CIVILIAN  
GARS APPEARS.



I WUZ... ONLY  
TRYIN' TA  
HELP

GUESS I  
MIGHT AG  
WELL GO  
HOME,  
HUH?



AHH... WHAT'M I POUTIN'  
ABOUT? THE KID DIDN'T MEAN  
NUTHIN' PERSONAL. SHE  
JUST NEEDS SOME TIME TA  
HERSELF IS ALL. ANYBODY  
WOULD, I S'POSE, AFTER  
ALL SHE'S BEEN THROUGH.

SURE. CUTTIN'  
OUT'S PROBABLY  
THE BEST THING  
-- COULD--

ON THE  
CONTRARY,  
BEN--

HUH? WHOZZAT?



DR. STRANGE, BEN--  
IN MY ASTRAL FORM.

I'VE BEEN  
MONITORING  
YOU AND VAL  
IN MY CRYSTAL.  
AND I AM  
CONVINCED--

--YOU MUST  
NOT LEAVE  
COBBLER'S  
ROOST!

MAN, YOU JUST DON'T KNOW WHEN TA QUIT, DO YA? I THOUGHT WE DECIDED YOU WUZ GONNA *LAY OFF* THE "I SPY" BIT! BUT NEVER MIND *THAT*! IF YA WUZ WATCHIN' ALL THIS...

THEN YA GOTTA KNOW THAT THE LAST THING TH' KID NEEDS NOW IS *COMPANY*! SHE'S *GRIEVIN'* MISTER, LET 'ER DO IT IN *PEACE*!



YOU *MISUNDERSTAND*, BEN. THE MYSTERY OF THE HARMONICA'S *INSCRIPTION* HAS YET TO BE *SOLVED*-- AND UNTIL IT IS, VAL MAY BE IN *GRAVE DANGER*.

YOU STILL HAVE THE INSTRUMENT, I TRUST?



YEAH, YEAH... IT'S RIGHT HERE.

GOOD. HOLD ONTO IT, BEN--AND PLEASE, *STAY* WHERE YOU ARE. I'LL BE ALONG *SHORTLY* WITH ANOTHER... *FRIEND* OF VALKYRIE'S.



I KIN HARDLY WAIT.

NUTS!! I'VE COME THIS FAR WITH THIS WHOLE CRAZY *BIZNESS*-- I MIGHT AS WELL SEE IT THROUGH TA THE *END*.



I JUST HOPE YA DON'T *MIND*--

--IF I CATCH ME A SNOOZE WHILE I'M WAITIN' FOR YOU *BOTOS*, AFTER ALL, I BEEN... AWAKE... ALL... NIGH... ZZZZ...



BUT EVEN IN *REPOSE*, BEN CANNOT BLUDE THE EVENTS OF THE NIGHT JUST PAST. WEIRD *IMAGES* HAUNT HIS DREAMS...

A GIRL WITH A *HARMONICA*... STRUCK BY A *SUBWAY TRAIN*... DR. STRANGE UNABLE TO *SAVE* HER...



A GIRL WHO DID NOT *DIE*, BUT RATHER *EXPLODED* INTO FIERY SPARKS WHICH SETTLED ON STRANGE, CLEA, AND FIVE OTHERS WHO STOOD ON THE SUBWAY PLATFORM.

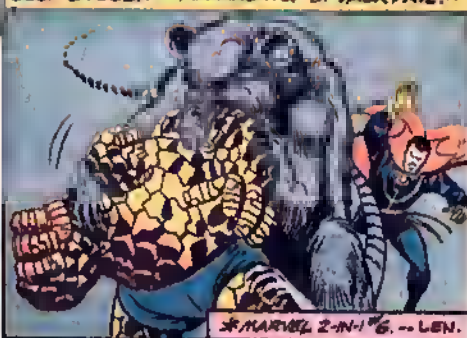
IN TRUTH, THE GIRL WAS NOT HUMAN AT ALL-- BUT A MANIFESTATION OF THE UNIVERSAL *DESTINY* FORCE, AS WITH THE *MOULTY* HARP SHE PLAYED. AND ALL THOSE PRESENT HAD, BY THEIR ACTION OR *INACTION*, HURRIED THEIR OWN MEETINGS WITH *DESTINY*.



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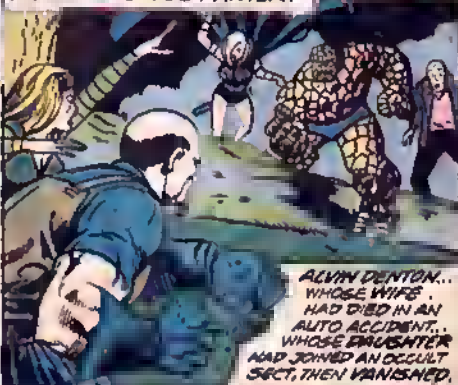


BETWEEN THEM, BEN AND THE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS MANAGE TO AVERT CATASTROPHE FOR FOUR OF THE WITNESSES. BUT THE FIFTH MAN COULD NOT BE FOUND, AND WHEN BEN AND DR. STRANGE RETURNED TO THE LATTER'S SANCTUM, THEY LEARNED THE HARMONICA HAD BEEN STOLEN-- APPARENTLY BY VALKYRIE.\*



\*MARVEL 2-N-1 #6. --LEN.

IN FACT, IT HAD BEEN THE DISGUISED ENCHANTRESS WHO HAD CAPTURED BOTH THE AND THE MISSING WITNESS, UNWARE THAT THE MAN WAS VAL'S FATHER.



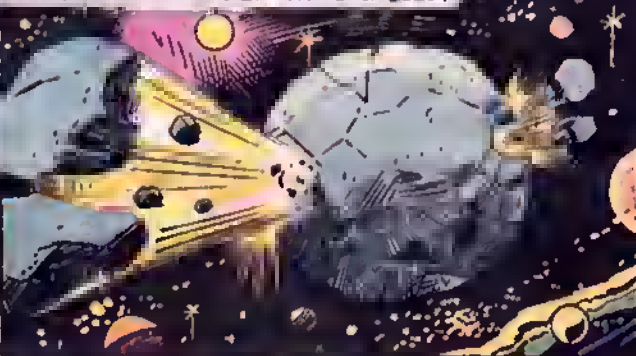
ALVIN DENTON... WHOSE WIFE HAD DIED IN AN AUTO ACCIDENT... WHOSE ELDEST SON HAD JOINED AN OCCULT SECT, THEN VANISHED.

BRIEFLY, THE ENCHANTRESS LIFTED THE FACADE OF THE VALKYRIE FROM ALVIN'S DAUGHTER... ALLOWED HIM TO SEE THE MADWOMAN SHE HAD BECOME.



FILLED WITH DESPAIR, ALVIN SEIZED THE HARMONICA FROM THE AEGYPTIAN SORCERESS, AND BELIEVING ITS POWER COULD CURE HIS STRICKEN BARBARA...

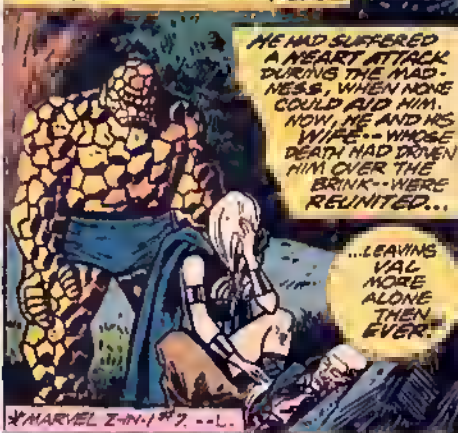
... HE BLEW IT! AND HIS DESTINY CAME TO PASS: HIS WORLD CAME APART BEFORE HIS EYES. BUT, AS WITH THE OTHERS AT THAT FATEFUL SUBWAY FORM, ALVIN'S DESTINY TOOK ITS LITERAL FORM. HIS WORLD-- THE EARTH-- CRUMBLED!



IN PITCHED BATTLE AMID THE CHAOS, BEN AND VAL DEFEATED THE ENCHANTRESS AND THE EXECUTIONER... REGAINED THE HARMONICA... AND BEN WAILED. MOMENTS LATER, THE WORLD WAS AS IT HAD BEEN...



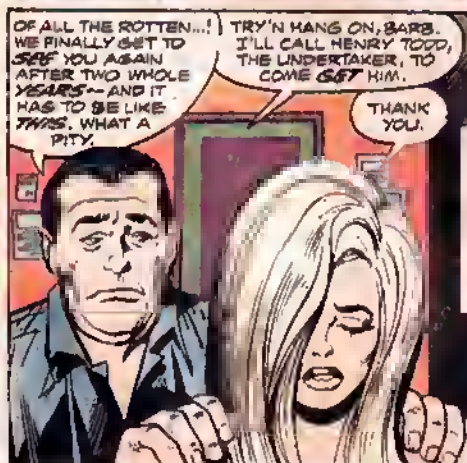
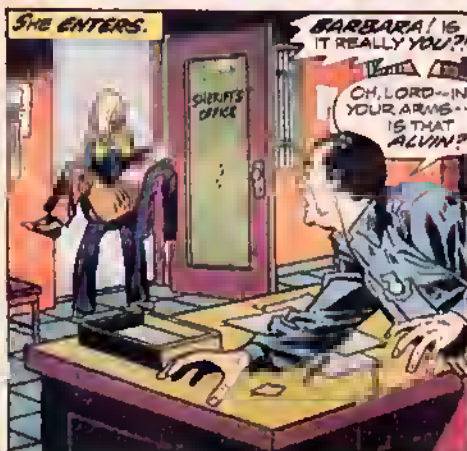
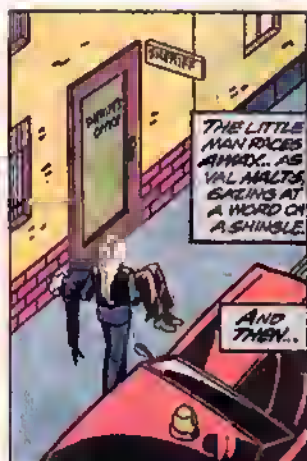
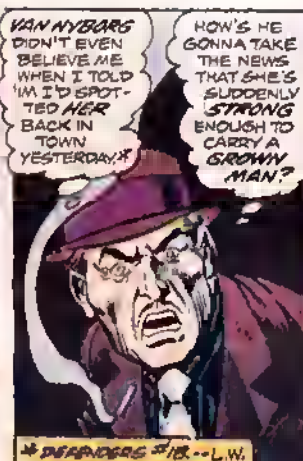
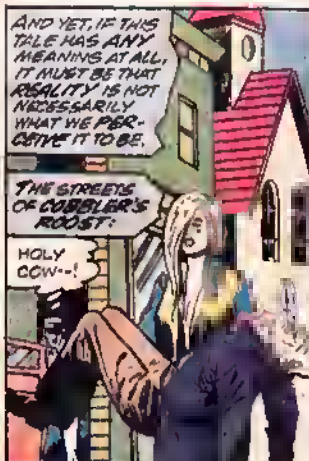
... SAVE THAT ALVIN WAS DEAD



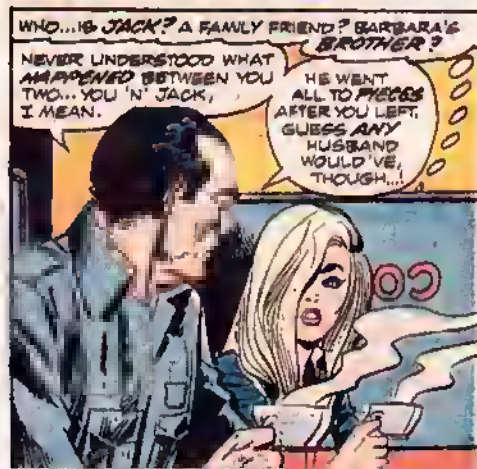
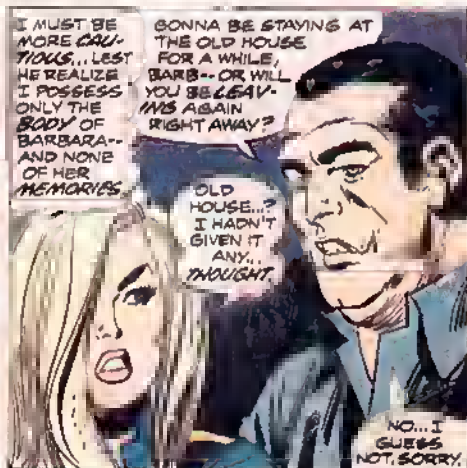
HE HAD SUFFERED HEART ATTACK DURING THE MADNESS, WHEN NONE COULD AID HIM. NOW, HE AND HIS WIFE-- WHOSE DEATH HAD DROVEN HIM OVER THE BRINK-- WERE REUNITED...

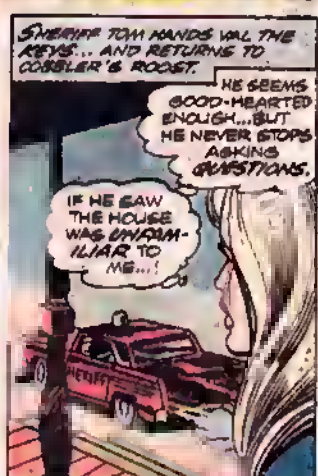
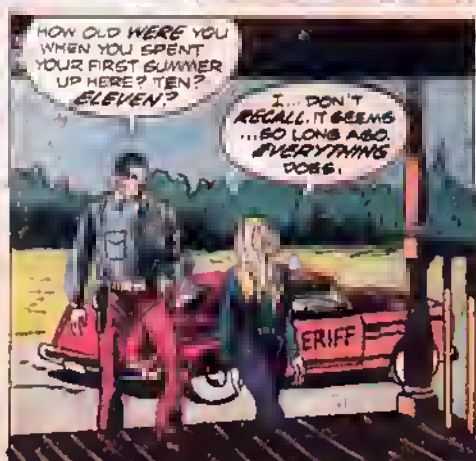
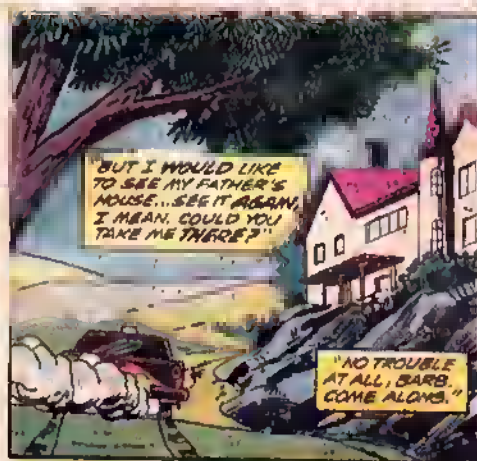
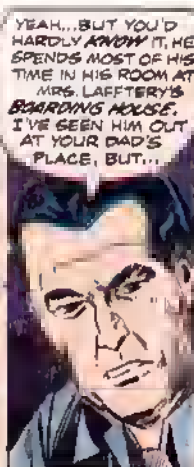
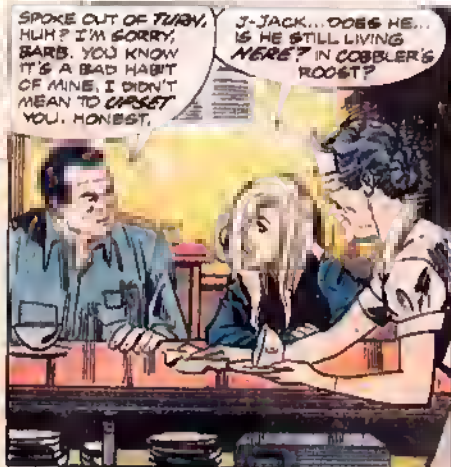
... LEAVING VAL MORE ALONE THEN EVER.

\*MARVEL 2-N-1 #7. --L.











ELSEWHERE: ORANGE EYELIDS  
FLUTTER OPEN; BEN GRIMM  
AWAKES.

THING!  
PLEASE WAKE UP--!

EEL--HUM?  
AW, GO 'WAY,  
REED--I NEED  
MY BEAUTY  
SLEEP--!

BEN! I AM  
NOT REED  
RICHARDS!  
WAKE UP!

BLAST IT, STRETCHO--DON'T  
MAKE JOKES--**BEAT IT**  
BEFORE I--

CRIPES! YA REALLY  
AIN'T REED!  
HOW'D YA  
GET HERE  
SO FAST?

BY THE POWER OF THE ETERNAL  
VISHANTI, IN YOUR PARLANCE...  
I ZAPPED US TO THIS PLACE.

NOW, PLEASE  
RISE, WE MUST  
HASTEN TO JOIN  
VALKYRIE. MY  
AMULET HAS  
DETECTED A  
HOSTILE  
PRESENCE...

IT'S  
PROBLY  
ME!

VER-RY FUNNY, BIG MAN.

UH, SAY, DOC,  
WHO'S THE GLOWN  
IN THE BIRD  
SUIT?

HE'S THAT  
OTHER FRIEND  
OF VAL'S. HIS  
NAME IS  
NIGHTHAWK.

UH-HUH. SOMEHOW, I GET THE FEELIN' YER  
MORE 'N JUST MUTUAL FRIENDS, THOUGH.

CLEA MENTIONED  
SUMPIN' ABOUT  
THE "DEFENDERS."  
YOU GUYS GOT A  
GROUP GOIN'  
OR SUMPIN'?

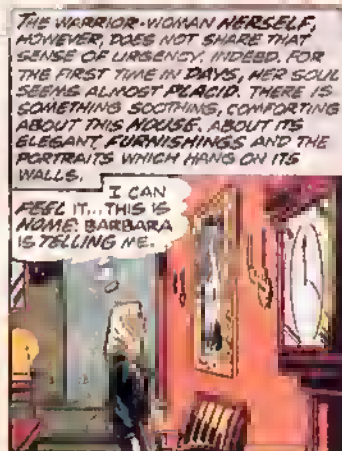
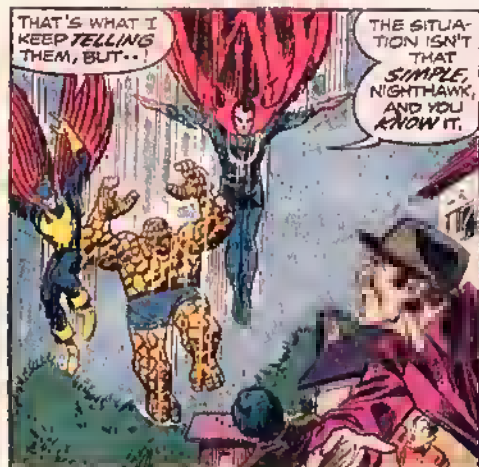
WE CAN DISCUSS THIS  
LATER, YOU TWO. VAL  
MAY NEED US NOW.

WHAT'S THE  
MATTER, DOC?  
EMBARRASSED  
BY THE ANSWER  
TO THAT  
QUESTION?

YEAH, THE  
DEFENDERS  
ARE A GROUP  
CLASSY NAME...  
OUR OWN  
HEAD-  
QUARTERS...

...AND SIX OR SEVEN MEMBERS. NIGHTHAWK!  
WHO NEVER WANNA GET  
TOGETHER! GOME OF US  
SHOW UP SOMETIMES--  
OTHERS, OTHER TIMES.

YEEESH!  
SOME GROUP!  
IF THE F.F.  
WORKED THAT  
WAY, THE  
WORLD  
WOULD'A BEEN  
DESTROYED  
TEN TIMES  
OVER BY  
NOW!





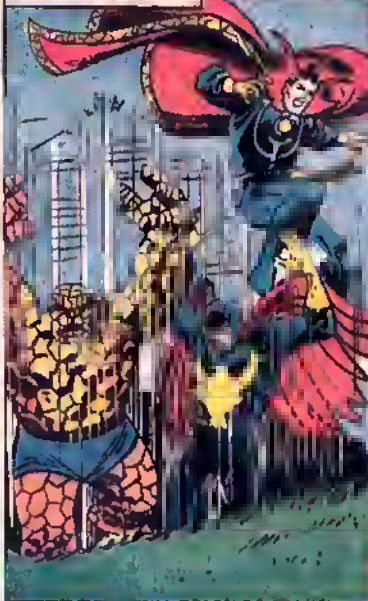


MOMENTS  
LATER,  
OUTSIDE--

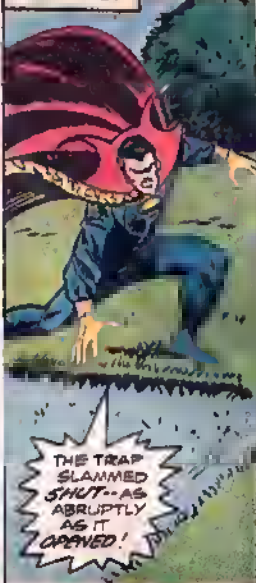
"BY TRACING  
THE MYSTIC  
ENERGIES  
OF MY SPELL  
OF CONCEAL-  
MENT, BEN,  
MAGIC HAS AN  
AFFINITY FOR  
MAGIC. THUS,  
MY AMULET IS  
HERE."

SHE IS VERY  
NEAR--PERHAPS  
WITHIN THIS  
DWELLING.

ALAS, MAGIC HAS NO SUCH AFFINITY  
FOR MECHANICS. THUS, THE TRAP  
DOOR WHICH OPENS UNDER THE THREE  
HEROES COMES AS AN ALL-TOO-COM-  
PLETE SURPRISE.



THE THING AND NIGHTHAWK  
DISAPPEAR INTO THE LAWN  
--AND ONLY HIS CLOAK OF  
LEVITATION HAS PREVENTED  
DR. STRANGE FROM DOING  
LIKEWISE.



THE TRAP  
SLAMMED  
SHUT--AS  
ABRUPTLY  
AS IT  
OPENED!



"THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING  
WHERE THEY ARE-- OR WHAT  
DANGER THEY MAY BE FACING!"

THIS WAS  
A TRAP  
FOR DOC?

WH-WHERE'S  
STRANGE?  
HE WAS  
SUPPOSED  
TO BE WITH  
YOU!

"WUZ" IS  
RIGHT,  
TWEETY-PIE!

CUZ THREE GUBBES WHO'S  
GONNA BE PLASTERED ON THE  
WALL O' THIS HOLE IF HE  
DON'T START TALKIN'--  
AN' FAST!!

SPILL IT, BLEAZY!  
WHAT'S GOIN' ON  
AROUND HERE??

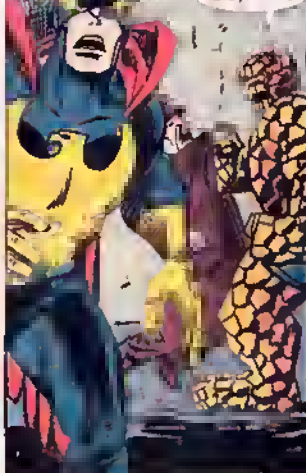
I-I DON'T  
KNOW!  
I SWEAR  
I DON'T!



DON'T WASTE TIME ON HIM,  
BEN. WE'VE GOT TO FIND A  
WAY OUT OF HERE--AND IT'S  
NOT GONNA BE EASY.

THOSE TRAP DOORS  
ARE TOO HEAVY FOR  
ME TO SHOVE OPEN--  
AND TOO HIGH FOR  
YOU TO REACH.

YA THINK  
SO, HUH?



I CAN TELL YA NEVER HAD ANY REAL POWER IN THIS GROUP O' YERS.

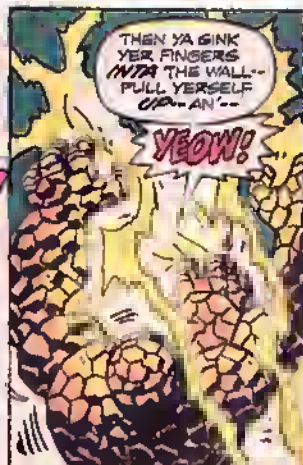
LEMMIE SHOW YA HOW IT'S DONE. IF THE DOOR'S TOO HIGH, YA DIG YERSELF A TRENCH, SEE?

**KRUNCH!**

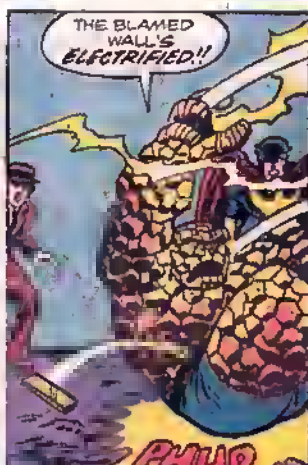


THEN YA GINK YER FINGERS INTO THE WALL-- PULL YERSELF UP-- AN'--

**YEOW!**



THE BLAMED WALL'S ELECTRIFIED!!

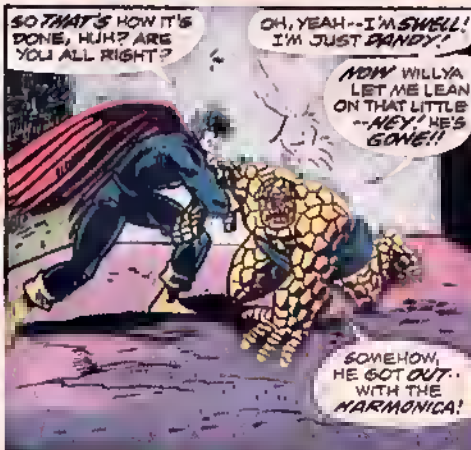


**PHUD**

SO THAT'S HOW IT'S DONE, HUH? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

OH, YEAH--I'M SWELL! I'M JUST DANDY!

NOW WILL YA LET ME LEAN ON THAT LITTLE--HEY, HE'S GONE!!



SOMEHOW, HE GOT OUT. WITH THE HARMONICA!

WHILE, ABOVE--

MY MYSTIC BOLTS ARE FARING NO BETTER THAN MY ASTRAL FORM AT PENETRATING THE TRAP.



SOME MAGICAL FORCE IS BARRING MY WAY.

A PITY I WAS UNABLE TO CONTACT THE AULK. A BRUTE FORCE MIGHT HAVE SUCCEEDED WHERE I FAILED.

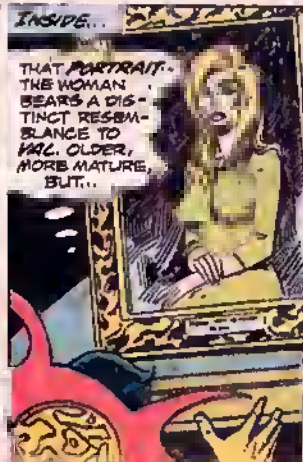
PERHAPS THROUGH THE MANSION... AH, THE DOOR IS UNLOCKED.



\*FIND OUT WHY IN THE CURRENT ISH OF GREENSKIN'S OWN HAS.--HE AGAN

INSIDE...

THAT PORTRAIT-- THE WOMAN BEARS A DISTINCT RESEMBLANCE TO VAL. OLDER, MORE MATURE, BUT...



"CELESTIA"?

THE INSCRIPTION ON THE HARMONICA--



--WAS THE NAME OF BARBARA'S MOTHER?

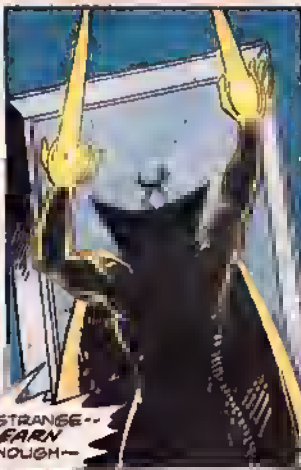
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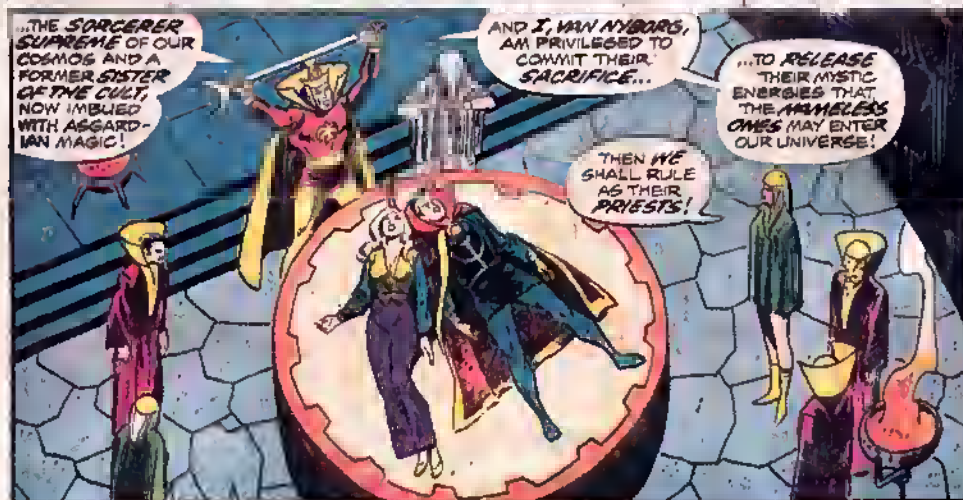
I CANNOT FATHOM WHAT THE CONNECTION COULD BE, BUT...

FEAR NOT, STRANGE-- YOU'LL LEARN SOON ENOUGH--



...WHEN YOU JOIN SISTER BARBARA IN THE BASEMENT, ON THE ALTAR OF THE NAMELESS ONES!

AND SO, MOMENTS LATER...



...THE **SORCERER SUPREME** OF OUR COSMOS AND A FORMER **SISTER OF THE CULT**, NOW IMBUED WITH **ASGARDIAN MAGIC**!

AND I, **VAN DYBORG**, AM PRIVILEGED TO COMMIT THEIR SACRIFICE...

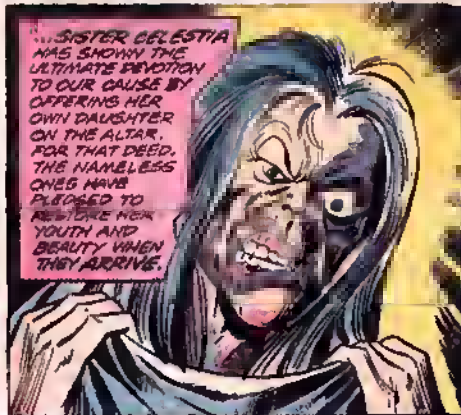
...TO RELEASE THEIR MYSTIC ENERGIES THAT THE **NAMELESS ONES** MAY ENTER OUR UNIVERSE!

THEN WE SHALL RULE AS THEIR PRIESTS!



AND LET US NEVER FORGET **WHIGG CHAIRING** HAS MADE THIS GREAT DAY POSSIBLE.

SNATCHED FROM THE MAW OF DEATH BY THE **NAMELESS ONES** THEMSELVES, THUS ALTERING THE COURSE OF DESTINY FOR TWO YEARS...



...SISTER **CELESTIA** HAS SHOWN THE ULTIMATE DEVOTION TO OUR CAUSE BY OFFERING HER OWN DAUGHTER ON THE ALTAR, FOR THAT DEED, THE **NAMELESS ONES** HAVE PROMISED TO REBORN HER YOUTH AND BEAUTY WHEN THEY ARRIVE.

"THUS, LET THE RITUAL BEGIN--  
LET THE ENERGIES OF STEPHEN  
STRANGE AND BARBARA DENTON  
NORRIS FLOW!"

THERE HAS TO  
BE A SLIDING PANEL OR  
SOMETHING.

KEEP  
LOOKING,  
BEN. HE  
COULDN'T  
HAVE JUST--

"I WALKED THROUGH  
THE WALL, I SAID  
ERRONEOUSLY.

BEN, LOOK AT THIS!  
THE WALL'S NOT  
SOLID IN THIS  
ONE AREA!

SO WHAT'RE YA  
WAITIN' FOR,  
BIRD-BRAIN?

MOVE!!

WHEREVER  
IT LEADS, IT  
CAN'T BE  
ANY WORSE 'N  
THIS!

BUT THAT, TOO, PROVES TO BE AN  
UNWARRANTED ASSUMPTION,  
FOR WHAT THEY SEE WHEN THEY  
EMERGE... MAKES THEIR BLOOD  
RUN COLD.

VAN NYBORG'S TWIN PRONGED  
FORK GLOWS, PULSATES...  
SUCKING ENERGY FROM THE  
BRAINS OF VALKYRIE AND  
DR. STRANGE.

AND THE BARRIERS BETWEEN  
DIMENSIONS... BEGIN TO  
DISSOLVE.

ALL  
HAIL  
THE  
NAME-  
LESS  
ONES!  
I AM

THE NAMELESS ONES!  
NEITHER BEN NOR  
NIGHTMARE IS  
AWARE THAT  
BARBARA HAD  
ONCE BEEN THE  
MATE OF THIS  
TWO-HEADED  
NETHER-GOD...

...THAT IT WAS HER FORCED UN-  
COUPLING FROM THE CREATURE  
THAT HAD DRIVEN HER MAD... \*\*

...THAT VAN NYBORG--AND  
CELESTIA--HAD ARRANGED  
THE OBSCENE MARRIAGE AS  
PART OF A PLAN!

DEFENDERS  
#3 -- LEN



CONSIDER: BARBARA'S HUSBAND "HAPPENED" TO BE A MEMBER OF THIS CULT AND INDUCED BARB TO JOIN.

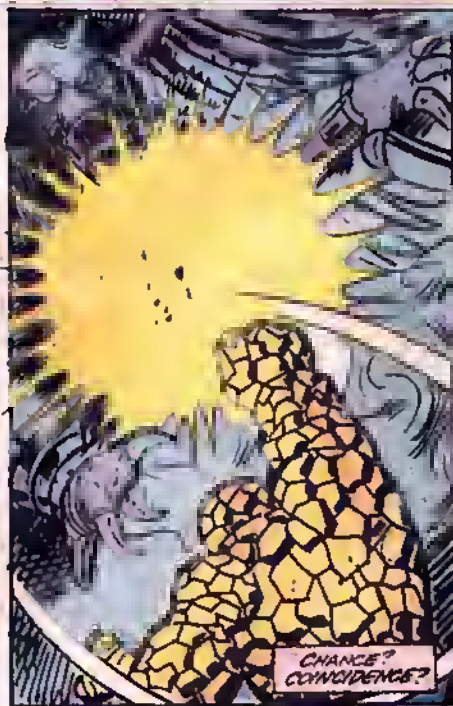
THE CULT THEN "HAPPENS TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR BRINGING THE GIRL, THE NULK AND DR. STRANGE TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME."

\* NULK #126.  
\*\* DEFENDERS #4. --LEN.

YEARS LATER, THE SAME MAGE AND THE SAME MONSTER FREE THE SAME GIRL... AND "HAPPEN" TO ENCOUNTER THE ENCHANTRESS. # 4

SHE CHANGES BARBARA-- AND THE GIRL IN WHOM NO MAGIC DWELT, WHO WAS THEREFORE USELESS TO THE NETHER-GOD'S OBJECTIVE OF EARTHLY DOMINATION...

...BECOMES A LIVING VESSEL OF ASGARDIAN SORcery!



CHANCE? COINCIDENCE?

OR THE DESIGNS OF A BEING WHO KNEW THAT DR STRANGE AND THE HULK WOULD MEET AGAIN... WHO KNEW OF THE ENCHANTRESS' FLIGHT...?

BEN! THE HARMONICA!! THE OLD WOMAN'S GOT IT!

...A BEING WHO COULD RESHAPE DESTINY TO BRING THESE SAME MYSTIC FORCES INTO CONJUNCTION AGAIN, TWO YEARS LATER...

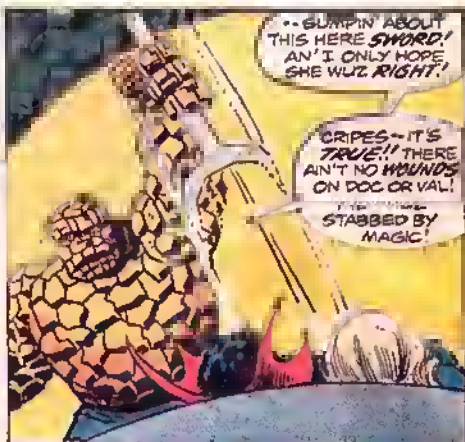
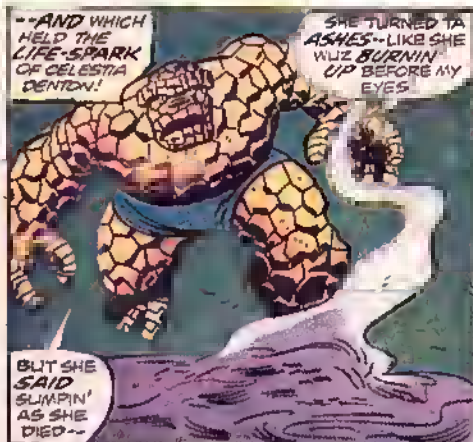
NO!

...BUT WHO COULD NOT PREDICT BENJAMIN GRIMM'S ROLE IN THE BIZARRE DRAMA...

THE UNREASONING AVAK MIGHT HAVE SPENT HIS POWER ON THE CULTISTS OR CELESTIA OR EVEN THE NAMELESS ONES THEMSELVES, TO LITTLE AVAL. BUT THE ARMORICA WOULD HAVE BEEN BENEATH HIS NOTICE. "DUMB MAGGO CAN'T HELP GIRL OR MAGICIAN!"

BUT BEN HAS DESTROYED THE "INSIGNIFICANT" OBJECT WHICH HELD THE MYSTIC FORCES IN STRAY...





**NEXT**  
VAL'S HUSBAND... A PEER AT NIGHTHAWK'S  
LIFE OUT OF COSTUME... A PRELUDE TO DIRE  
TRAGEDY... AND AS DEADLY A MENACE AS THE  
DEFENDERS HAVE EVER CONFRONTED...

**THE  
HEADMEN!**